

**Steve:** [00:00:00]

And welcome to, or welcome back to the On Coaching Podcast. I'm Steve Magnus, joined as always by my good friend and colleague, Jonathan Marcus. John, what is going on, my man?

**Jon:** We back giving the people what they want another day, another dollar, another podcast. Let's roll.

**Steve:** That is right. We've got another good one for you today. Becoming a great coach, the art of managing workouts. And before...

**Jon:** The shit I use. I wish I knew 20 years ago.

**Steve:** Yeah, so that is what it is. That is what it is. Yeah, you know, I, I think this is the evolution of a coach is what we're going to talk about. And before we get in there, you know, I have to mention if you want to accelerate.

[00:01:00] That coaching so that you don't have to learn this lesson 20 years later. Like John and I had to, um, the best way to do that is to interact with your peers, to see what 500 plus 600 plus other people are. Doing and to learn from people who have the experience so that you can accelerate that learning so that you don't have to make all the mistakes and go through all the trials and tribulations and trial and error to figure out what works and what doesn't and what you should pay attention to and what actually matters and what doesn't and you know, you don't have to go live at a, at a coaching convention every week to do that. We've got it for you. It's called the scholar program.

**Jon:** Essentially, right. It's the time square of coaching. Like that's how I'm framing it. Cause I mean, there's just so much going on. So many people interacting. You know, you can just tap in wherever you want. It's literally the time square. Like it's cool to see this community blossom and [00:02:00] sustain and thrive, you know, over 600, maybe even 700.

We're not really counting, but she knew Louise, there's always something popping. But yeah, if you haven't tapped in, if you

haven't signed up, if you haven't become a scholar less than a, you know, a couple, it's a buck and a couple of pennies on the day, like, I mean, it's just an amazing, amazing value. So tapping, give it a shot and like joyous in the time square.

**Steve:** I love it the Times Square of coaching. I mean, that's what it is it's got your one stop shop for everything and you've There's so many different avenues to explore there from interactions to courses I'm actually just you know, just dropping the Tom Tellez biomechanics course. I have I've dug through the archives of everything Coach Tellez has given me.

I've gotten papers written from, I don't know, 50 years ago.  
Feels

**Jon:** Yeah, the GOAT!

**Steve:** the, the good stuff where we're just [00:03:00] breaking it down in his style so that you can see how one of the, uh, sprinting biomechanical geniuses coach, coaches. So there you go, you know, not only interacting. You got, you got resources too.

**Jon:** what I love about Tellez is he, he takes the very complex anatomy and physiology and science of it and puts it in transferable, relatable, applicable language to the everyday athlete and the everyday coach. Like, no one does it better. A lot of people hide behind like the, you know, medical jargon or scientific jargon.

Talez makes it applicable. I mean, for the scholar program, everyone knows in the wickets, we talk about putting the foot down. I took that straight from Talez. Just putting the foot down through the wickets, getting that connection, getting that simple cue. Uh, you know, that is the genius of a great coach like Talez.

**Steve:** There we go. Sent takes complex and makes it simple. Done, done. Try and fancy it up and, uh, complicate it.  
[00:04:00] So if that interests you again, with the interaction, the courses, all sorts of stuff, sign up now, you won't regret it.

So let's, let's head on over to our becoming a great coach series, the art of managing workouts.

And you know, John. As you alluded to, this is something that is so neglected early on, because I'm going to take us back to when we were getting started coaching, what did we think we thought it was about designing the

**Jon:** Mm.

**Steve:** man, if we just, if we just wrote the perfect training schedule, if we just had the great sequence of, of workouts and, you know, intervals and tempos and thresholds and, and just put it all together, man, our athletes were going to.

Take off. It was finding the secret recipe. And yes, those things matter to a degree. We've talked about them, but what matters more, I think, and that is so neglected. Is what you're doing [00:05:00] during the workouts, how you're managing those sessions, how you're adjusting, how you know when to adjust, what to look for, um, how to adapt as you go instead of just getting in there and being like, Oh, I wrote 10 by 460 on the paper and you get to number five and they're running 62s.

We're just going to keep going because I wrote it on the paper and the paper is always right.

**Jon:** Yeah, I'm so glad you said that. Like, I actually had a great moment this week, you know, talking with, uh, my young assistant coach that, you know, just rockstar energy, rockstar, you know, growth mindset, but, you know, just shallow on experience. Right. And that's from the fun part of being able to now, like nurture someone in that role that Steve and I were in 20 years ago, that just wants to figure out how to do it, how to get better, you know, we learn best by doing, but.

[00:06:00] I was telling him, I said, Hey, what's the difference between this player right here, who might be just a regular run of the mill college basketball player and an NBA superstar when they are doing jump shot practice. Right. And you know, he couldn't really do it. Like, he's like, he got to make X, Y, Z

number of free throws, you know, very numerical, very much like, Hey, let's stay on the shallow and superficial.

Level of this and saying, if I just get these 3000 jump shots in, I'll be good. If I just get these X, Y, Z, you know, a hundred miles in a week, I'll be good. And the reality is, is it's not that right. What we're doing is we're training for the competitive moment. We're training the competitive mindset. We're training for the ability, for the privilege, for the capacity to step up.

Be a heads up in competition. Understand when it's time to take a risk. Understand when it's time to like put yourself out there and go for it. Like in basketball, right? It's like the person who [00:07:00] wants the ball for the last second, play a last second shot. The person who wants that pressure filled moment and the difference, right, is when we just look at workouts as something where if I just get the physiological stimulus, I'll get better.

That's true. A hundred percent, but you also have to see. What we're trying to do in our managing workouts is managing the mental side of preparation, the capacity of saying, Hey, I need you to tap in, focus, grind a little bit, get really hard here because you know what, at this point in the race is going to be the exact same thing so that you're creating this bridge between the perceived degree of difficulty and expectation that the athlete's going to have.

On the practice track, as well as so that when they meet the competition track, they have the readiness to compete.

**Steve:** It really is that connecting piece. Right? I think instead of seeing workouts and stuff as like distinct and different on, hey, we're just going to get the physiology and that's [00:08:00] it, um, it's that connecting. And I remember, you know, learning this, this lesson early on, um, it didn't quite sink in, but as I, I reflect, like, I remember my high school coach who used to ride behind us on like Fartlicks and like workouts like that.

And there's so many workouts where he'd, you know, we'd have a hard fart, like in, in the middle, he'd be riding his bike and he'd be like, Hey, I want you to imagine, you know, this part of the state me, then here's this competitor. And what I didn't realize at the time is he was trying to connect, like what we were going through in the workout.

With, like, the race, and then where it really kind of came to fruition with me was, um, when I was training with Scott Rasko and Alan Webb and Moses Joseph and those guys, and we'd be at the track, and it was the first time I'd ever experienced this, we'd be at the track, and Rasko wouldn't tell you the full workout. You know, what he would do is he'd be like, you know, you'd, you'd, you'd go through your warm up and all that [00:09:00] stuff. You'd be watching how you're working out. We'd be talking. At first it was nerve wracking and then you adapted. You'd be like, I wonder when it's on the schedule for today and you'd have no idea.

And At first it's like, it's weird. It's like, if you're not used to that, you're like, does he know? Like, is he making this up? Like, is he just pulling this out of it? Like, what's he doing? But as, as you got to know, uh, Coach Rasko and understand his method is, what was he doing? He was waiting to see how the warmup looked. And then once he saw how the warmup looked, he, like, either stuck with what he had planned or adjust or, you know, modified. And then once we got into the workout, instead of saying, Hey, John, we're going to do eight by a K at this pace, whatever. He'd tell you the first rep or the first sets, you know, he'd be like, I want you to run this mile in, you know, 4:35, or I want you to do these [00:10:00] four 400s in 62 with a 45 second shot.

And, and, and you'd be like, okay, I'm going to do this. And then you'd finish that set. And then he'd come back and he'd give you something else. Right? It was like this one set at a time. And at first you're like, why is he doing this? And then you understand it's like this adaptive training where he's looking, he's like testing, you know, how you look, how you're responding, where you're at, you know, and then adjusting.

And then the last part that really kind of cemented, and this gets back to your connecting, is especially in the final reps, he would have you connected. To the race, he'd be like, this is where you're like, you know, he'd either say something. I think it was like hit it, which meant like you excel all the way, like you surge hard to the finish.

Or he'd be like, I want this, this rep where you're going. This 800 rep where you're going, you know, 200, [00:11:00] every 200 faster, faster, faster, faster, whatever it is. And he'd connect that to, this is the last part of the race. This is the championship part of tactics, whatever it was. And it was this, it's the first time I'd ever experienced this kind of crescendo of coaching. Within, you know, within the workout versus not saying my other coaches didn't coach, they did a good job, all that stuff, but Rasko really took it to another another level of what I'd call aware and adaptive and connective coaching.

**Jon:** Yeah, I mean, it's, it's a difference between focusing on just conditioning the physiological parameter as well as conditioning the mental aspect of it too. Right? So often I feel like we get lost. In this sea of, you know, who has the best physiological conditioning sessions. And we talk about double threshold or CV or VO2 max or this or that.

What the F does that have [00:12:00] to do with Hitting it on race day and kicking someone's ass, right? It, it makes it emotionally detached from what we're actually trying to do in the, in the competitive arena, which is competitive practice, competition, practice, right? Practicing for the competitive moment. And we.

Sometimes can forget in our community that that's really, really important. And this is where it kind of lines get blurred, right? If you're trying to get someone to qualify for say some type of, you know, race, like say Boston or the Olympic trials or what have you, you know, in the marathon or on the track.

And it's all about, we just got to get the mark to get there. But once you get there, what are you going to do? What are you prepared to do? And it's not just solely a conditioning aspect. It plays a big part, a big dynamic in it, but also too, we

sometimes undercut the import of the mental component of saying, I'm mentally ready to race and risk because racing means risk.

[00:13:00] If you do not take a risk, you are not racing. You're, you know, it's something else, right? It's a time trial. It's a, it, you know, it's a, a rehearsal event in my. In my opinion if there's no risk moment or multiple risk moments, then you're probably not in a race

**Steve:** Yeah, I'm so I, I think that's, that's a great distinction there because like what you're trying to do is again, like put it, workouts aren't just like conditioning. They're not just, you know, I think this is the example I'd give is if we go into the weight room and we lift some weights, right. As a runner.

That's, that's kind of conditioning. What are you doing? You're lifting to get stronger, more powerful, et cetera, et cetera. Now there's some stuff in the weight room we can do to connect outside, obviously. But let's say you're just basic lifts in there. You're just getting conditioning.

**Jon:** Mm[00:14:00]

**Steve:** Out on the track, like.

That can work at a lower level where it is possible to get fitter than everybody else and rely on that fitness. But the more competitive we get, the more people that are in there, that's not going to work. I mean, you're going, fitness, everybody is going to be relatively Equal or close to it in terms of, of fitness.

I mean, you just have to look at it. We'll use the example from the world championships in the 1500. I forget the stat exactly, but, you know, I think the vast majority of the finals feel in the men's 1500 was literally between 327 and 329 points. Something, you know, we're talking, you know, a less than three second gap.

Over 1, 500 for basically the entire [00:15:00] field. You know, there were a couple exceptions, but basically the entire field.



And when you're talking at that spot in a non rabbit race, what that means is, like, yes, like, you might be slightly more conditioned or fit or what have you, might, you might have, you know, three quarters of a second more fitness than the other guy around there, but that's a very small margin. And what matters, again, and I think we saw this, what often matters more is not just having that fitness, but the execution of the tactics, the execution of the mental game, the understanding of the complexity of, of the crucible of racing. And I think what you see is those that prepare for that, those that connect their workouts to it, Are the ones who succeed.

And in fact, we, you know, not to talk about him too much, but Danny Mackey, like nailed this was Josh Kerr. Like you looked at interviews after you talked to Danny after [00:16:00] as we have, and you look at, you know, I think Danny was quoted somewhere and said, saying it's like the, the a hundred meter splits aren't a secret for like the world championships, like they're all there, you know, from the past championships, like study them and you know, roughly.

what you have to be able to do in the crucible of that. And Danny expertly, like developed and guided workouts to be able to do that and be able to handle the crucible of racing in that last, especially that last lap of like how to, how to handle the pressure, the stress, the, the pushing, um, and the right time.

Because like, You know, he ingrained that with, with Kerr in practice.

**Jon:** hmm. Yeah. And you know, let's take a step back, right? A lot of people look at it and go, Oh, I got to run a half marathon for 1500 meter runners now to do that. It's like, no, that's not that's not The takeaway here, right? If you look at Josh's build up and training [00:17:00] into the, you know, winning a gold medal in the world championship, 1500, like a lot of people are just going to copy what he did, but not understand why they did what they did or the mindset.

Behind it, or how things stacked up for the big shot, right? This was a, you know, if you look at the sequence of how they prepared throughout the course of the year, this is a strategic



circle, big red, you know, circle on the calendar on one day in August saying, we're going to put all our chips in for this.

We're not going to worry about indoor. We're not going to worry about early season outdoor. We're going to put all our chips in for that. And I think that's a hard part. For people to digest is saying, look, a clean athlete who can't bounce back and run a gazillion fast times back to back to back to back weeks, you only really have one home run opportunity in the race calendar.

And that's, that's what practice can [00:18:00] and should be is getting a race ready for your big shot or your sequence of shots, right? At Portland State, it's super duper simple for us. Don't care about any other race that is not named a championship. So I mean, it's conference and regionals and ultimately eventually nationals, right?

Don't care about anything else. Everything else is preparation. Everything else we're just out there trying to like create extension in our race plan. You know, all the meats were in September, even October, they're not championship could care less. Why? Because you really just in running, you know, it's super simple.

You have to hit. The things that matter most, but you have to define that early. And it's been interesting to see, you know, personally the mindset shift with all the student athletes here when they realize, Oh, I don't need to like prove fitness week one or week two to get on this. I go, it's a long March.

We got eight weeks of training before like our actual first big race that matters that we're actually getting ready for let's focus on that and let's use these. [00:19:00] Preparatory meets exactly what they are prepared. You know, we are blessed in running to not necessarily have that when lost record impact your post season or tournament ability.

Um, and as long as that's the case, like you prioritize accordingly.

**Steve:** And I think that it's, it's a shift from seeing it as a proving ground,

**Jon:** Mm hmm.

**Steve:** right? To see as a development and the skills you're developing. And I think the same is if we look at races, but the same as workouts, do you see workouts is proving your fitness or developing you holistically and racing, running?

Like and of course fitness as well, but you're developing it and that's that's the difference. So let's let's get concrete here when we look at Managing workouts. I think this is a great distinction here because if you're about proving that fitness or that Physiological proving that you're there then when you have your 10 by [00:20:00] 400 and 60 seconds you do Everything you can possibly To beat that time,

**Jon:** Mm

**Steve:** right?

It doesn't matter what you're doing. The time is what you need to prove. You can run under, under 60 seconds for these 10, 400 so that you get the confidence so that you could do it in a race. That's the proving fitness. The other side, when we look at coaching these workouts, is understanding that we're trying to get both a physiological and psychological adaptation out of it.

So, if you're, if you understand that going in, you understand what are we trying to do with this workout? What level of intensity or effort does it need to be at? What level of biomechanical, we'll call it fatigue or breakdown, do I want to occur? to push them at? What psychologically am I trying to get out of this?

Am I trying to get them to be in a little over their head and hang on? Or am I trying to simulate a little bit of what they'll [00:21:00] face in the race where the fatigue accumulates, accumulates, accumulates, and then the last rep, um, I want

them to be able to, you know, not just survive it, but accelerate into the Into, you know, the, the kick or whatever, have you like, you have to make those decisions on the front hand and that's not just proving fitness.

That's like preparing you for competition.

**Jon:** Yeah, I'll give a good, a good example, right? So like managing flux workouts, a lot of people, it's hard for them to wrap their head around flux workouts at first, because you just want the cut and dry. Do this big chunks. Easy. No big deal. Six by a mile, three mile, two mile, one mile. Hey, whatever. We supposedly get the aerobic stimulus only that way.

Flex workouts are much more about progressions, right? And understanding how are we moving people forward? So I'll give a really good, here's a concrete example, right? Where you just [00:22:00] finished up our first foundational block. For like the Portland state women's cross country team, the cornerstone in what we call endurance tempo or specific workout that we do twice a week is a flux workout of essentially 400 meters at a specific pace.

So 92. 5 percent of target race pace, right? And so for the women, that's currently 88 seconds per quarter. And so the workout is started off as sets of. 2000 meters fluxing between 400 meters at specific, uh, 88. Seconds, a hundred meter, you know, float down. Fluxx not easy at about 28, right? So we started off doing three times two K Fluxx, 488, a hundred meter 28 continuous, three minutes to four minutes recovery, continu sets.

Then we compliment that with one times three K at what we call aerobic support, which is 82.5% [00:23:00] of target race pace. So for these women it was six 20 mile pace. We do that workout. And progress that twice a week on Tuesdays and Fridays three weeks in a row So we started doing that workout in the beginning of september.

We're now in the middle of september and we did the last progression of that right on tuesday and that progressed to 2 times 3k of flux at 400 at 88, 100 at 28, and then 1 times 4k at

aerobic support or 82.5 percent 624 mile pace. The same stimulus over and over and over and over and over again. The whole block.

We're not getting faster, we're just creating extension, right? Start off with 2k's, finish up with 3k's. It's amazing to see how collectively everyone adapted so rapidly to the stimulus. And so for athletes who like might be a little bit more fit and it wasn't just challenging, we opted then instead of [00:24:00] doing an aerobic support 4k after this to do say another round of 3k flux.

So you can do the math on this. It's pretty simple math, right? The flux, right, that they're doing, you're at about 24 minutes of Work. Right, and it is, it is threshold, right? We call it threshold. It's just threshold in a different manner. So of specific work that we're specifically running a lot at 80 eights, specifically 24 minutes of that, then you do the steady part or the aerobic support part, as Canova calls it, or 82 point a half percent.

That's another 12 minutes. You're getting 36 minutes. of quote unquote hard specific threshold running twice a week for three weeks in a row. Just start doing the math. Start doing the understanding of the mitochondrial biogenesis signaling events in enzymatic response. And what's happened, right, is we had a lot of women who might have been JV in the past or [00:25:00] non travel, whatever you want to call them, all of a sudden be able to adapt and have collectively.

10 women from a variety of different backgrounds like oh, I wasn't on a travel squad I was hurt all this time last year. We had 10 women on You know, Tuesday, be able to do two times three K flux, which is freaking hard, you know, but then we manage it afterwards. Right. And so some people, it's like, all right, for the steady state, right.

Or for aerobic support, you know, go until, you know, we want to make sure like, Hey, I don't want it to be a grind. I don't want to put you under. So we had people like tap it and tap out. Right. And so some people would tap out of the lap to hop

back in, you know, several women did it, the whole four K continuous.

But it was about managing the most important stimulus first and making sure that progressed over the last several weeks. And then to seeing each individual, where they were from a capacity, aerobic capacity standpoint, say, okay, you're riding that line, but this aerobic support work that we're doing now right [00:26:00] after will help like create an elevated bump in a signaling event.

But we don't want to, Push you. So you go under, right? And so that's where the dialogue and conversation happens. And so on paper, right? It's not nice and clean. It's really messy. Quote, unquote, because this athlete's doing a mile at aerobic support that are taking a 400 off this athlete's doing 1200 taking a 400 off this athlete might do 800.

You know, take 400 off, do another 800, take 800 off, finish off, like, you know, and that drives people's brains crazy because you're like, I can't track the exact miles. It's like, no, no, the stimulus is what counts. The exposure, what counts. And as that athlete expresses in the secondary part of the session, the supportive part of the session.

That's where you have that management, but the goal is, right, you always for the primary part of the session or the primary part of the workout or stimulus you're trying to inject on the athlete that you build that progression and it happens slowly, but surely, but you just have to keep, it's like the Bonner Chuck stable gains approach, just keep [00:27:00] doing the same thing over and over and over again.

And we have two places that we do this workout, right? There's a great turf field out in, you know, west of campus that is fancied by, you know, Gayler Rupp and, you know, um, myself, uh, that's a, we call it the secret spot, but it's a 500 meter turf field, and it's just like kind of tucked away in this beautiful, gorgeous setting, really soft, really smooth, you know, just out there and west of campus. And then we have the track, you know, that's right by campus that we do it. So we go track, turf, track, turf, track, turf. So we vary up where

the location, but not too much variation. But the amazing thing is, right, as you manage it, athletes are starting to see this progression. They're starting to see fitness.

They're starting to see buy in. And two, we're also concurrently talking to athletes to like manage and Um, predict as well as, uh, interpret how they're feeling during the workout and putting them in this [00:28:00] stage of the race. Okay. This is how it's going to feel at this stage of the race, three quarters in or two thirds in or the final, you know, finals bit, right?

So that they're able to connect that conditioning bridge physically as well as Mentally. So when we show up on race day, when it counts for us at the end of October, we have given ourselves as best a shot possible to be race ready.

**Steve:** So I, I, I love that explanation. I'm going to ask you, John, a little bit more on this is walk our listeners through the decision making process as you know, you mentioned in that flux, as you're mentioning how to either progress in the session or like, you know, what you're looking for and what you're seeing.

**Jon:** Yeah. It's so super simple, right? What we're wanting to do is we know that what we should see from a signaling capacity standpoint is an elevation of an aerobic enzymatic response. So [00:29:00] week, you know, session in and session out two sessions within a week, we should see people being able to handle more load.

That's just the isative part. I also do work glycogen depletion, like we talked about in the last podcast. So the whole goal of this is managing the time of specificity that we're exposing the athlete to so in cross country We essentially anchored and said we want to try to get the women's team to be able To have a realistic shot to manage well and race well at five 30 mile pace for 20 and a half minutes, which is six K at this place, Sacramento on this date, November 10th, right?

That's regionals. So everything's built back from that. Okay. We're trying to just move collectively this team to have a best

shot as possible to manage five 30 mile pace for 20 and a half minutes. So now we work back and we say, okay, where are we really? In terms of that. So that's 100 percent or specific race pace for the cross country women's cross country team [00:30:00] So in the foundation block, right?

We're spending a lot of time in what we consider the range of specificity, which is If you're using canola's language, it's 120 percent of race pace to 80 percent of race pace. So plus or minus 20 percent So i'm two days a week on Mondays and Thursdays, we spend time doing work at 115 percent of race pace or fast 200s, right?

And then we also compliment that then on the day. So we'll do like, say 10 times 200 fast at 3k for 115 percent of target race pace. Then they'll go over and they'll do, you know, error from 2k to, you know, 5k. You know, worth of aerobic support as we call it, or 82 and a half percent of race pace. So six, 24 mile pace, no big deal.

Tempo after the twos, that's day one day twos. Then what I just explained the flux workout with aerobic support afterwards. So [00:31:00] again, now we're dialing in specificity and we're saying, all right, we're going to do a lot of work right now at 92 and a half percent of race pace or 80 eights. And then. Back it up or support it with eight more, 82 and a half percent.

So the way you could frame that out of this language is a lot of speed on day one with sub T following it, and then day two, threshold, anaerobic threshold within aerobic threshold or sub T, right? When you do the math on that, if the athlete collectively through the block, which our blocks are three weeks long, Is able to do everything without an eruption like the whole full meal deals.

I call it you're getting 90 131 minutes of work in three weeks at 92 and a half percent 130 over two hours are spent at At 92 and a half percent target race pace then you have a route [00:32:00] roughly Um, let's do the math here over 90 minutes spent at aerobic support or sub t. So now you have three and a half hours spent in quote unquote threshold and then you have



30 minutes spent at kind of race, uh, speed, you know, speed tempo or whatever you want to call it.

Over a three week period, that's enough signaling with frequency of it to make it so that we get adaptation. Because I know where we want to go, which is always extension, right? We always want to extend. We want to run further, longer, or with less recovery. Then we manage that appropriately for each athlete in the moment.

So, We strategically pick loops of 500 meters or 400 meters so that we can manage them tapping in and tapping out, as we call it, or like, hey, okay, this person's really starting to get a really heavy degree of lactate or acidosis in their system, take, take this quarter off or take two minutes off, then hop [00:33:00] back in.

So the wave, as we call it, the green wave is always flowing. The pace train is always going, but sometimes the people on the train. Shifts, right? But it's always going. And so we manage just enough recovery here or micro there and this is what igloo is doing friends at the track at Santa Barbara, California at the track and, you know, hungry.

He was because we kept it. In a really confined space People could always tap it and tap out and get the right stimulus for them on that day, right? And if someone's expressing a little bit more moderate glycogen depletion or the legs are heavy or whatever It's no big deal They still get enough dosage and we maximize that for them to get the signaling event.

We need to get better

**Steve:** All right, no, thanks for explaining that. I think that makes, uh, makes a lot of sense. Um, I, I think, you know, another thing that I look at is the art of managing workouts is. is again, like you're talking about the progression, [00:34:00] you know, between and within. I think the other part of this is like the things you're looking at in the workout themselves to adjust, abandon, you know, quit, quit, like shift gears, et cetera.

And I think this is another nuanced place where we, we often. Often, uh, you know, neglect at the very beginning of our coaching journey because, you know, our goal is to finish X workout. And if we don't, we're in trouble. So I go back to, there's just simple things where, you know, as coaches, we're, we're taught to like, look at the stopwatch.

And give it the full attention if they're running faster or slower, like that indicates stuff. And it does like the time absolutely, you know, gives you feedback, but there's other feedback as well. And some of the things I always look at is, you know, the mechanics [00:35:00] we've mentioned this before is the mechanics in the breakdown and the shift, like tell you something.

And I learned this actually, as, as I know you did as well as from watching. Sprint coaches train because if you go watch a sprint workout, you know, um, often what it is, is once they mechanically stop doing stuff that is, looks how, you know, the coach wants it. Often the session is saying, nope, you're done.

Why? Because they're saying you're under fatigue. I don't want you to survive under fatigue. I want you to have good habits under fatigue and good body positions and mechanical positions under fatigue. So we're going to stop so that we don't ingrain bad. Habits, essentially, and, and, and distance running, we don't do that.

And obviously we have to handle a different level and type of fatigue and all that stuff. But I think there is some, there [00:36:00] are some time periods where you're like, what am I ingraining here? And if the mechanical breakdown is so dramatic or so shifting that you're getting people to just survive. Well, guess what they're going to do in a race survive.

And you can often identify, you know, athletes who have gone through this. It's the ones who, you know, you watch a race and that last whatever, 400 or 800 of whatever race it is. It's, it's just, people just are breaking down left and right. And they're going into this survival mode and racing where it's like, Oh.

You're, you could like maintain speed or be able to kick so much better, but you've just kind of ingrained surviving and workouts. And this is how you're, you're doing the thing that you know how to do, right. Which is like get. You see people do crazy stuff with their arms or legs or leaning forward or backwards or all sorts of stuff.

And [00:37:00] often like people do that because like, that's how they survive the workouts. So one of the big things I'm always looking for is like, is the mechanical shift, mechanical shift or breakdown or whatever you want to call it in the workout, is this appropriate? What I've expected, or can I change, you know, or do we need to alter so that we don't ingrain bad habits or do I have the opportunity to say, Hey, like, this is a good lesson.

You're under fatigue. Let's shorten this, this work, this instead of going to 400 rep, go 200 rep, which you might be able to handle and let's nail the. Let's ingrain good mechanical habits so that we can, to use your words, extend that eventually, so that you can hold that over 300, 400 meters or what have you.

**Jon:** Yeah, it's all about like, what are your compasses right? And that's that's really the compasses guide training and they guide management of training in the moment. So the stopwatch is a compass, right? The coach's eye, so to speak for mechanics. That's [00:38:00] another compass. Uh, another one is just a stopwatch.

Conversation with the individual and asking them, Hey, how are you doing? How are you feeling? Can you articulate, you know, do you feel like you're redlining? Do you feel like you're grinding? Do you feel like this and that? Right? And as a coach, when you write a session, you want to know kind of the sensory or somatic state you're trying to put the individual in.

And if their reaction. At that stage in the session is the appropriate place for what you intended or not. And then when, if it's not, that compass of checking in, getting that feedback helps you create that micro adjustment in the moment, right? That pivot, so to speak, where it's like, Ooh,

you're already redlining and we're only halfway through the session.

Oh man, that wasn't the intent for you. Put you here today. It is what it is. And then it's like you kind of ping that in the back of your brain for maybe a debrief afterwards where you talk about their glycogen or like, you know, uh, nutrition [00:39:00] intake, sleep, stress levels, trying to, you know, Click off the big rocks of what might've put them in that state where they just weren't, uh, workout ready.

But in the moment you have to say, okay, how do we get the most out of the condition the athlete is expressing? And sometimes that's pivoting the session, you know, making it. Well, extending the rest, uh, minimizing the rep of work. And sometimes it's just cutting the whole damn thing. You know, like you gotta be okay with that too, because you're dealing with people that are fluctuate and have variability and it's not always going to be as nice as neat on the piece of paper as you'd like it.

**Steve:** Absolutely. And it's, and, and that's like, it's, I think that's why it's often useless because it's like not the nice, neat, round number that Tells you what to do, you know, Oh, I'm slowing down. I should do this. And I think there's other things like, you know, it's not only mechanics, but it's other things like, um.[00:40:00]

You know, one of my favorite things, we mentioned Scott Rasko watching the warmups, our, our, uh, our mentor Vern Gambetta used to say, I'm gonna screw this up, but he, he, he used to say like the, the warmups are the movement screen. Right where it's like this is you don't need the movement screen. You need to watch them warm up and that tells you how to adjust and what to do.

And then the other other thing that I often like to do is within the workouts, um, is look at. The body language and yeah, the, what are the athletes doing during the recoveries between reps, between sets, you can often see how someone's handling it, not only physically, but also emotionally by, you know, do they, between sets as they're like head down, are they just.

Surviving or are they like, you know, talking to their teammates, pumping each other up, being like, Hey, we're doing great. We, we can do [00:41:00] this. And, and that gives you that, that feedback there where it's like, Oh, this person's like, this person's handling this workout and thriving in it versus this person's like on the edge and like just getting through it any way they can.

And you're just looking for those subtle cues, which gives you some information on that, you know, you might need to adjust. Uh, the workout as you go.

**Jon:** Yeah, I mean, it's so easy, right, to be an Excel sheet coach and just say, all right, I have this beautiful progression of load, intensity, volume, etc. And that is definitely, again, it's a map, right? It's like, all right, how do we actually tackle this thing, which is getting race ready or getting fitter? But the coach's eye that is, you know, unfortunately it's only learned through the hard knocks of experience.

Like it just takes times and reps and hours and hours of just observation. Why we say, Hey, you shouldn't be on that cell phone, you know, at practice, you know, looking at Instagram or being distracted because the [00:42:00] better you get to know the, um, you know, Body language expressions of an athlete when they're up, when they're down, when they're, you know, have good vibes when they're kind of like cloudy days, the quicker your decision matrix can be and the more effective your coaching is.

**Steve:** Absolutely. And that's what it's like. It's like getting the, it's developing the, uh, the data from observing and watching practice enough and observing and watching individuals enough so that you understand their signatures of like their Physical, emotional, biomechanical, like shifts, breakdown and changes.

You should understand that of those athletes. And I often, you know, this is why one of the things that I often would do as a coach is I would hand the, the, uh, the timing off to my, you know, graduate assistant or my volunteer assistant and be like,

Hey, you time this. And then I [00:43:00] just watch. And sometimes I'd go to the, I learned this trick from a.

A couple of college coaches who were mentors says I'd go and sit in the stands up in the top of the stands and like change my viewpoint from like standing right at the start line of the track and just change my viewpoint. See, hey, if I observed from a slightly different view, do I see different? Things because you often do when you change your perspective and you're like, Oh, this athlete is breaking down, et cetera, et cetera.

And then the other thing I would say as a coach, and I know as a coach, I'm more of the like, you know, talking. Get in the face and yelled. And you are John. You're more of the sit back. But what I would say is, I would also say when you're coaching athletes is change your view and perspective as well. Some of the things that you know, coaching athletes that meet some of the things that I've I've learned athletes the best, especially during those preparation races [00:44:00] is don't get right on the rails and yell at your athlete.

All the time, go sit in the stands and watch. And it's a little tougher for those who are in enthusiastic, but what it does is this forces you to change your perspective and often notice things, right? How many races that we sit side by side, John, and we looked at our athlete and we're like, Oh. You know, it can go either way.

You're like, they're, they're looking like a billion bucks. They're gonna wait till they get to 800 go and there's start picking up and inevitably they did, or you'd watch and you'd be like, Oh, they're on the edge. They're about to break down because of how they look here, here and here. And it gives you that in that feedback where you're like, Oh, I can read and understand my athletes.

And I'm not just guessing. But I've observed them long enough where I understand the, the biomechanical, the kind of like emotional, the body language cues of, uh, how they're handling [00:45:00] things.

**Jon:** Yeah. It's, you know, race readiness is always understanding what's the pinnacle event. Where are you getting them prepared for? And like kind of going back here recently, uh, It's last couple of years, it's like coaching high school and getting, you know, athletes ready to compete at a championship state championship level.

It's just the slow, steady March. But like say with, uh, the young woman I coached a couple of years ago, won the state title in the 15 and the three K it was really just about like on the day after like getting her ready and training her and just getting her conditioned physically. And then also mentally and emotionally where the conversation day of.

At the warmup track was super simple. It's like, Hey, how you doing? Doing good. I, you know, all right. You ready? Yeah. He's like, what should I do? Coach? I go, well, for this race, you know, it's, it was like windy hailed conditions. I go, it was the three K like. I was like, just take it out [00:46:00] hard. See if anyone can hang. You got sure. Yeah. Okay. And then it's like, boom, we just did that. Right. She didn't even think about the 1500 the next day. It was like sideways hail. The first four laps, like she takes out hard runs away from it, from the gun. Right. Then. Okay, good. We got done with that one. Then the next day we didn't even talk about the 15.

I said, Hey, just enjoy this victory tonight. We'll talk about the next race tomorrow morning at the track. Talked about it at the track. It was what you do. Well, you know, she had to. She was competing against a 15. 8 kid and she, the 15. 8 kid was fresh because the 15 is the first race, uh, on the second day of the state championships than the eight.

So I was like, you know what, just, uh, fill it out. Maybe somewhere from 500 ago, start to express yourself and make your move, but then just, just compete after that. Right. So follows 800 meter gal makes a move. At 500, takes the lead, the 800 meter gal takes the lead again at 200 to go, [00:47:00] and then it was like a decision moment for the young woman, uh, coming on the final home straightaway, it's like, do I let this person win or do I want it?



And I didn't yell anything. I have video of myself just like watching with 100 meters to go and just filming her. I go, and I turned to like another coach or a friend of mine, I go, She's going to go for it. And she went for it, right? She like crawled her way back and ended up winning this, the 1500 meter by like 0.

05 seconds or something like lean at the line. Right. And so it's not about like the outcome. It's about the opportunity to compete. And so she found herself in that moment, that competitive moment. And she made the decision to just go for it and explore. It wasn't like you have the best. Time in the state, you have to win all this pressure.

It's like, no, all that stuff just got you to the moment. All the training we did physically just gets you to the moment. The mental part, that is where the decision is actually made when the [00:48:00] moment expresses itself and being race, as I call race ready to say, I'll just go for it, let's see what we got.

Let's give it a shot. Right. And it worked out in her favor and for other athletes to, you know, same dialogue, same situation, like had a guy in that same, I think it was that same year in the 800, right. And he was, comes up to me, I go, he's like, coach, what should I do? And I go, this kid didn't ever want ran, you know, ran, stayed in the 800.

Never, you know, whatever. It was like a four kid that became an eight kid that season. You know, it was part time sprinter, part time distance runner, toggling between the two groups. And I go, Hey, you know what? Your strength is your speed. Trust that with a hundred meters to go, just take off. Don't look back, see what happens.

And he just did that. Right. And one state, like it was, you know, wild and crazy in that regard, but it's like just getting kids that an athlete's that level of trust, but also to making sure they're not only physically conditioned, but mentally conditioned just to focus on the most important [00:49:00] thing and executing that task.

We do that. In practice saying, Hey, this is the most important thing, this rep, this pace, this, this, this part of the workout. And so then when we get to a race, we're not thinking about all these inputs and variables or worrying about the split or how fast we went out or this or that. It's just like, you have one job, do your job.

Execute give it a shot. Just give it the old college try. Don't worry about anything else because a lot of times we get decision fatigue on race day because we're worried about way too many inputs because we're more focused on the finite game as I call it like the game outcome of like where I stack up was my splits all these different finite variables.

Versus the infinite game and the infinite game is the competitor's game. Let me get the competitive moment. Give me the shot with everything on the line. I want that pressure. It's exciting because that can change the trajectory of my life. It [00:50:00] gives me an opportunity to take a risk and race and actually see what I got versus this Oh, did I live up to expectation?

Did I fit on my rank order? Did I was split good enough all these Statistics that really tell a story post mortem but actually have very little feedback or Import in the moment as the actual physical person's making decisions and acting

**Steve:** absolutely. You know, I'm glad you brought that up. And I think that's a. Wonderful way to summarize this up is like the physiology, the, the fitness, all that stuff helps you get to that moment,

**Jon:** Yeah

**Steve:** but then when you're in that moment, like it's something else and that's what you need to, like, that's often the difference maker, maker is it's not the fitness.

Have you trained to respond? In that moment where you take on the challenge you where you approach instead of avoid where you [00:51:00] go towards the thing and make the decision to do the thing, um, versus not. And then actually, it

reminds me of this research that looked at clutch performers across domains. When you're looking at sports, you're looking at, you know, uh, climbers and artists and all that stuff.

And one of the characteristics that kept popping up is. The researchers found is there was a decision, there was a decision made, like, where you go towards the discomfort, where you go towards the thing where you say, I'm gonna, I'm gonna do this, right? it came up over and over again. And that's one of the things that define clutch performers.

And I think what we're, we're describing in this kind of crucible of racing is like the fitness gets you in the ballpark, but you've got to train everything else and manage the workouts so that you have this ability to flip that switch when the time comes.

**Jon:** Yeah, it's a subtle but important distinction, and you know, I just want to harp on it because I think [00:52:00] it's so, so lost in the training and preparation, uh, dialogue that we have. It's like, it's not being outcome focused in terms of we have to hit these many statistics to in order to have the privilege or capacity to Be fair or race at this level or whatever.

And we get lost in those statistics. We get lost in those, those outcomes, right? Because they're easy to track super duper easy, but it's just, it's giving this space and opportunity in the moment to explore and go for it and try it and test it out and experiment and discover. It's a different language and there's going to be failure.

There's going to be, you know. Uh, times when it backslides and times when it doesn't go to plan, but that's all part of the developmental and learning and achievement process is right there. So that process orientation, that's the key. And if the process happens, maybe the outcome will be. You know, [00:53:00] favorable a lot of times we harp on trying to manipulate and make the outcome what we want it to be versus understanding like the outcome.

No one knows it until it actually happens. All we can control is our response in the moment towards trying to take a risk and go for it.

**Steve:** Absolutely. So there you go. I think that's a good way to kind of sum it up because you know, that's what we're trying to do is. It's see workouts through a different lens and not just, uh, let's gain fitness and hope it all works out lens. So, we, we hope you, uh, got something out of this that is a little bit different than just focusing on workouts and

**Jon:** took us collectively 40 years to get a new friend. So

**Steve:** Yeah, there you go. So, take the advice, you know, run with it. And if you want to explore this more, don't forget to check out the Scholar Program where, uh, you know, we go into depth and we talk to 600 plus or who knows how many of our

**Jon:** growing and growing every [00:54:00] day.

**Steve:** That's right. That's how we do it. So check it out until next time.

Thanks everybody for listening and continue on coaching.